

Department of Public Health
and Human Services

Section:
APPLICATION PROCESSING

FOOD STAMP PROGRAM

Subject:
Expedited Services

Supersedes: FS 105-1 (04/01/05)

References: 7 CFR 273.2, 7 CFR 273.15, 7 CFR 274.2

GENERAL RULE -- The intent of expedited services is to provide food stamp benefits within **seven calendar days** from the date of application to eligible households in immediate need. The seven calendar days for expedited processing include weekends and holidays and do not lengthen time frames to process expedited benefits.

The expedited period is the period of time benefits are issued.

FAIR HEARING REQUEST

When an individual requests a fair hearing due to the denial of expedited services, an 'agency conference' is scheduled within two working days unless the household requests the conference be scheduled later (FS 1506-1).

DISCOVERY DATE

The discovery date is the date an application is found eligible for expedited processing. The goal is to have the discovery date the same as the date of application. When the date of application differs from the discovery date, the seven-calendar day period for expedited processing begins on the date of discovery. The OPA Case Manager must document in case notes the reason for the discrepancy when the date of the application and the discovery date differ.

EXPEDITED PROCESSING CRITERIA

All applications must be screened for expedited processing immediately upon receipt in the Office of Public Assistance (OPA) when the applicant requests food stamp benefits.

Households meeting the following criteria are eligible for expedited processing:

1. Have less than \$150 in gross monthly income **and** \$100 or less in liquid resources; OR,
2. Are destitute migrant or seasonal farm worker households with liquid resources not exceeding \$100 (FS 105-2); OR,
3. The household's combined gross monthly income and liquid resources are less than its monthly rent or mortgage and the appropriate mandatory utility allowance.

≥

≥

NOTE: When the application is submitted the screener must evaluate the information provided on the application and/or question the applicant to determine the appropriate mandatory utility allowance (FS 602-4) for expedited processing.

EXPEDITED SCREENING

At the initial inquiry all individuals must be informed about expedited processing eligibility and the right to protect the date of application. The application must be screened for expedited processing even if only the first page of the application is submitted.

If there is a request for food stamps and the expedited screening section of the application is not completed, the screener must evaluate the completed application (if available) to the best of their ability based on the information provided and knowledge of policy. If the screener knows income listed on the application is excluded according to Food Stamp Program policy, the income is excluded in the screening process. Eligibility is not generally determined at the time of the screening, and it is not required for the screener to go beyond the screening box to decide whether income is countable or excluded.

NOTE: *Anticipated* income (e.g., TANF, unemployment income, etc.) *that has not been approved or authorized is not included* when screening an application for expedited processing.

An application may appear eligible for expedited processing but during the interview and after the information is entered on TEAMS, it is determined the application does not meet expedited processing guidelines. The application is subject to regular processing guidelines that is issuance within 30 days of the date of application and all verification provided.

POSTPONED INTERVIEW

Expedited processing cannot be delayed due to the inability to interview the applicant. An interview must be completed to continue benefits past the expedited period. The interview is postponed if all of the following criteria listed below are met:

1. The **application is completed and signed; and,**

NOTE: If the application is incomplete but it appears the household may be eligible for expedited processing, the OPA staff should attempt to contact the household and complete the application. An application is complete when all

≥

questions **with 'F'** on Application for Assistance (DPHHS-HCS-250) or all questions on the Food Stamp Program Application (DPHHS-HCS-252) are answered and the person making application or an authorized representative signs the application. **Only one signature on the front or back page is required on the application regardless of whether or not the case is entitled to expedited processing.**

2. The applicant cannot be reached in a timely manner to schedule an interview or is unable to attend an interview the day the application is submitted; **and,**
3. Verification of **identity** (FS 103-5) is readily available in the OPA. Hard Copy ('HC') verification code on RECI **is** sufficient and is 'readily' available to the OPA.

POSTPONED VERIFICATION

Expedited processing allows for **postponing** verification for the expedited period.

EXCEPTION: The applicant's (e.g., the person making application) identity must be verified. A picture is not required to verify identity (FS 103-5).

The postponed verification must be provided by the last day of the month that benefits were issued (e.g., the date of application is July 16th, so verification must be provided no later than August 31st).

≥

When the last day to provide verification falls on a weekend or holiday, the household has through the following business day to provide the verification.

APPLIES ON OR BEFORE THE 15TH OF THE MONTH

When a household who is eligible for expedited processing applies ON or BEFORE the 15th of the month and verification is postponed, the OPA Case Manager must send the household the F121, EXPEDITED FS-POSTPONED, notice. The notice informs the household of the first month's benefit amount. The notice also lists the required postponed verification, the date the verification is due (end of the application month), and the date and time of the scheduled interview (if applicable) to continue benefits after the expedited period.

If postponed verification is received for households applying on or before the 15th of the month, the second month's benefit must be issued within seven working days from receiving the verification or by the first working day of the second month, whichever is later. Timely notice of adverse action is not required.

**APPLIES ON OR
AFTER THE 16TH
OF THE MONTH**

Households applying ON or AFTER the 16th of the month and eligible for expedited processing **must** have the first month's prorated benefits AND the second month's full benefits issued on the same day they are determined eligible. Neither month's benefits can be held for an interview nor verification except for verification of the identity of the person making the application.

When a household that is eligible for expedited processing applies on or after the 16th of the month and verification is postponed, the F120, EXPEDITED FS-POSTPONED VERIFICATION-2 MONTHS, notice is sent to the household by the OPA Case Manager. The notice informs the household of the first month's prorated benefit amount **AND** the second month's full benefit amount. The notice lists the required postponed verification, the date the verification is due (end of the month of the expedited period), and the date and time of the scheduled interview (if applicable) to continue benefits after the expedited period.

When postponed verification is received for households applying on or after the 16th of the month, the third month's benefit must be issued within seven working days from receiving the verification or by the first working day of the third month, whichever is later. Timely notice of adverse action is not required.

**PROCESSING
EXPEDITED**

When an application is screened and determined eligible for expedited processing, the OPA Case Manager determines eligibility after all information on the completed application is entered on TEAMS. Benefits must be authorized on the same day as the date of application; however, when circumstances arise that *cannot be controlled by the OPA*, benefits must be authorized as soon as possible (e.g., TEAMS is not available) to ensure benefits are received within seven calendar days.

Issuance of benefits must not be delayed to obtain any information except the identity of the person making application.

The OPA Case Manager uses all readily available information/ documentation to verify the household's residency, income, resources, and information provided on the application by the household. System interfaces such as MISTICS (Department of Labor and Industry), P-Justice (Department of Justice/Motor Vehicles), SEARCHS (Child Support Enforcement Division) are reviewed and used as verification when applicable.

A household is not required to provide a Social Security number (SSN) for expedited processing; however, a SSN must be provided or verified

a SSN was applied for before benefits can continue beyond the expedited period for each household member.

The OPA Case Manager requests the applicant register for work by signing the affidavit for work registration (Form HCS 543-A) unless all household members are work registration exempt. The OPA Case Manager attempts to verify questionable work registration exemptions for all household members but verification must be postponed if the expedited processing time cannot be met.

A household must be eligible for benefits in the month of application to be eligible for expedited processing.

EXCEPTION: When the household is not eligible for benefits for the initial month of application but is eligible for expedited processing the following month, the household must be given an opportunity to participate within seven calendar days from the date of the application or by the first working day of the second month, whichever is later. The application is denied the first month and processed the second month as expedited.

If a household is eligible for the program but is not eligible for expedited processing in the month it applies, the application must be processed under regular procedures within 30 days from the date of the initial application. The application is processed under regular procedures even if the household has zero income in the following month. The first and second months are approved under regular application processing.

All information on the application is entered on TEAMS before eligibility is determined. When a household lists unverified information on the application, it is entered on TEAMS with client statement verification code 'CS'.

The application can be denied if the household provides information by client statement or other verification causing ineligibility. The application is processed under regular processing requirements (30 day time frame and all verification is required) if information is discovered when completing the eligibility determination that results in ineligibility for expedited processing.

Example: During the interview, the applicant states her 20-year-old son is also living with her, and they purchase and prepare food together. Children under age 22 are

required in the filing unit. His income causes the case to be ineligible for expedited processing. The application is pended until all verifications are provided using regular application processing time frames.

**CHANGES
REPORTED AFTER
THE INTERVIEW
BUT BEFORE THE
NOTICE OF
ELIGIBILITY**

A household is required to report all changes related to its eligibility at the interview. A household is required to report changes according to its reporting requirements after receiving the notice of eligibility (approval notice) for ongoing benefits.

If a change is reported **after the interview but before the notice of eligibility (approval notice) for ongoing benefits**, the OPA Case Manager must act on the change within 10 days of the change being reported regardless of the household's reporting requirements. The change must be included in the eligibility determination for ongoing benefits. Benefits must not be delayed (held or pended) beyond the last day of the expedited period waiting for verification.

EXCEPTION: Resources available at the time the household is interviewed are used to make the resource determination. Changes in resources that occur or are reported after the interview but before the notice of eligibility (approval notice) for ongoing benefits is sent to the household are disregarded for the expedited period. The changes must be considered in determining resource eligibility for ongoing benefits.

If there are 10 days before the last day of the expedited period to verify a change, eligibility is not determined until the verification is received. The change is included in the eligibility determination for ongoing benefits.

If there are not 10 days before the last day of the expedited period to verify a change, eligibility is determined for ongoing benefits based on information requested at the interview. The OPA Case Manager must request verification be provided within 10 days of sending the notice of a change that is reported after the interview but before the notice of eligibility for ongoing benefits.

If the verification is received before eligibility is determined and the notice of eligibility for ongoing benefits is sent to the household, the change is included in the eligibility determination for ongoing benefits.

If the verification is received after eligibility is determined and the notice of eligibility is sent for ongoing benefits, the change is included

in the eligibility determination for the month after receipt of the verification following notice of adverse action procedures.

Example: The household applied for food stamps on June 17th and received expedited services. Postponed wage verification from Wal-Mart is due July 31st. The household submits the verification of Wal-Mart wages July 30th and at that time reports a new part time job at Subway.

August benefits must be issued within seven working days from receiving the Wal-Mart wage information. The OPA Case Manager must send a 10-day request for information notice to verify the income for the new job at Subway. Wage verification from Subway is due August 16th and is received August 16th. The OPA Case Manager acts on the verification August 25th. Timely notice for adverse action cannot be given to the household to decrease September benefits. The Subway income is used for October and timely notice of decreased benefits must be sent to the household.

If the wage information was received August 9th, the Subway income is used to decrease September benefits and timely notice of decreased benefits must be sent to the household.

NOTICES FOR EXPEDITED PROCESSING

If the household is interviewed and no verification/information is needed, the OPA Case Manager must send the household the approval and the appropriate reporting requirement notices on the same day expedited or continued benefits are authorized.

If the interview is postponed or more information is needed after the interview to determine continued eligibility and the benefit amount, the OPA Case Manager must send a postponed verification notice (F120 or F121) to the household.

The notice informs the household of required verification needed such as income, an interview, etc. or the case will close without further notice. The notice also informs the household of items requested such as rent, utilities, child support obligation, etc. but the case will not close if the items are not submitted; however, if expenses are not verified, they cannot be allowed as deductions.

The household is not required to report any changes after the interview until receiving the notice of eligibility (approval notice). Therefore, the reporting requirement notice must not be sent prior to the approval notice for continued benefits. If sending a postponed verification notice

to a six month reporting household, the OPA Case Manager must delete the system-generated F011, '6MR Reporting Requirements', notice. If the postponed verification is submitted before the end of the expedited period, the approval **F101** and the appropriate reporting requirement notices are sent to the household by the OPA Case Manager on the same day continued benefits are authorized. The household is required to report changes according to its reporting requirements after receiving the notice of eligibility (approval notice).

REPEAT EXPEDITED APPLICATIONS

There is no limit to the number of times a household may be eligible for expedited processing. The following criteria is required before approval for subsequent expedited services:

1. All *postponed* verification requested during the previous expedited processing must be received; **OR**,

NOTE: If the household is unable to obtain the information/verification due to no fault of their own, expedited benefits are approved and verification is not postponed for continued benefits. The OPA Case Manager must document in case notes why the information cannot be obtained.

Example: John was issued expedited food stamps for January 2004. The case closed January 31st, 2004 due to failure to provide *postponed* verification of a job ending. He reapplies in October 2005 and meets expedited criteria.

The household and OPA Case Manager are not able to obtain the information because the employer is no longer in business.

Expedited benefits are approved and verification for the job ending is not postponed for continued benefits.

2. The household was certified under normal processing standards since the last expedited certification.

Example: A household applied for food stamps on September 16th and was eligible for expedited processing. The case was certified for September and October with postponed verification that was due on October 31st. Verification was not

provided, and effective November 1st the case was closed.

In December the household applies again. It is not entitled to expedited service because the household has \$500 in liquid resources. The household is not required to provide the postponed expedited verification from the September application. The household completes the application process and is certified for December through November. They do not reapply at recertification.

In August the household applies again and is eligible for expedited processing. The household may be expedited because it has been certified under normal processing since the last expedited certification. The fact that postponed verification was never received for the certification in September is not relevant any longer.

RESIDENTS OF SHELTERS OR PUBLIC INSTITUTIONS

When a resident of a public institution applies for SSI and food stamp benefits and is eligible for expedited processing before their release from the institution, the filing date of the application is the date released from the institution. Benefits must be available within seven calendar days from the date of release from the institution.

Residents of shelters for battered adults and children who are eligible for expedited processing must receive food stamp benefits within seven calendar days of the application being filed.

HOME BOUND APPLICANTS

If the household files an incomplete application and is being interviewed at **home**, the application must be completed during the home visit. If a phone interview is conducted, the application must be completed by the OPA Case Manager during the interview and mailed the same day to the household for its signature. Benefits are not authorized until the signed application is returned. Document in case notes explaining good cause for delayed expedited processing.

TP